

of both political parties to develop an education plan that starts making sure children learn before they just get shuffled through the system.

One of the saddest facts about my country is that there are a significant number of fourth grade students who cannot read at grade level. Imagine a child who can't read in the fourth grade is a child that's not going to be able to read in the eighth grade. And if a child can't read in the eighth grade, it's likely that child's not going to be able to read sufficiently when they get out of high school and, therefore, won't be able to go to college. It's a shame in America that that's the case.

So as part of an education bill I managed to get through Congress last year, we've got a significant reading initiative, where we'll work with the States and the local jurisdictions to focus on an education program that emphasizes reading. This year I hope to work with my wife and others on a early childhood development program, so the youngsters get the building blocks to learn how to read.

I'm actually working my way to your question, I promise you—[laughter]—be-

cause education is the best anticrime program. It's important to enforce law. It's important to hold people accountable for their actions. It is important to have consistent policy that says, "If you harm somebody, there will be a punishment for that harm." But in the best interests for my country, the long-term solution is to make sure the education system works for everybody. And when that happens, there will be a more hopeful future for people, and there will be less poverty, less hopelessness, and less crime.

Listen, thank you for letting me come. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the main hall. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Hu Jintao of China, who introduced the President; President Jiang Zemin of China; and U.S. Ambassador to China Clark T. Randt, Jr. A participant in the question-and-answer session referred to the theater missile defense (TMD) system. Participants asked their questions in Chinese and then in English.

## Statement on the Train Fire in Al-Avyat, Egypt *February 22, 2002*

I am profoundly saddened by the terrible loss of life in the train fire in Al-Avyat. This tragedy is all the more horrible because it took place during the holiday of Eid al-Adha. Laura and I and all of the

American people offer our deepest sympathy and condolences to President Mubarak, the Egyptian people, and especially to those families who have lost loved ones.

## The President's Radio Address *February 23, 2002*

Good morning. As I return from a successful trip to Asia, the United States Sen-

ate will return from its recess for an important debate on America's energy security.